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## Uncle Henry Wallace: Letters to Farm Families

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*Uncle Henry Wallace: Letters to Farm Families*, edited by Zachary Michael Jack. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008. xviii, 199 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Virginia Wadsley is an independent scholar and freelance writer in Des Moines. She has conducted research for the Wallace family, made presentations about their family history, and is working on a book on the work of Uncle Henry's wife and daughter with *Wallaces' Farmer*.

Fourth-generation Iowa farmer's son Zachary Michael Jack has republished open letters by Iowa agricultural editor Uncle Henry Wallace (1836–1916) that originally appeared in *Wallaces' Farmer* and then in book form by popular demand. Fascinated with Wallace's Victorian character development messages, which have "remained uncannily true" although "sometimes dated in their particulars" (xiv), Jack chose selections from *Uncle Henry's Letters to the Farm Boy* (1897), *Letters to the Farm Folk* (1915), and the three-volume *Uncle Henry's Own Story of His Life* (1917–1919), plus several memorial tributes and will excerpts. The edited arrangement moves from moral exhortation to "cautionary tales" and continues with expository advice. Jack's introductory material is the story of his own journey with Uncle Henry as well as a brief biography of the man he describes as "preacher, farmer, editor, philosopher, lecturer, counselor, friend, everyman" (1) and mistakenly calls the "scion," rather than forefather, of the "most famous farming family in American history" (xi).

Jack's purpose is neither biographical nor scholarly. Instead, the book is designed to complement Richard S. Kirkendall's *Uncle Henry: A Documentary Profile of the First Henry Wallace* (1993) and Russell Lord's colorful if not entirely accurate *The Wallaces of Iowa* (1947). Although the introductory setup perhaps relies too much on Lord and tends toward adulation rather than critical analysis, Jack rightly allows the letters themselves to reveal the soul of the "man of alluring and illuminating contradictions" (xv). Readers will be drawn into the Victorian ethos as the "hobbledehoy's" parents, chums, social life, brain food, and habits are discussed and then be led to contemplate twenty-first-century issues as "commercial morality" is criticized. This is a book for smiles and reflection with universal appeal.

*The Life and Legacy of Frank Gotch: King of the Catch-as-Catch-Can Wrestlers*, by Mike Chapman. Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 2008. xi, 149 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Randy Roberts is distinguished professor of history at Purdue University. His books include *Jack Dempsey, the Manassa Mauler* (1979); *Papa Jack:*